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Agenda item 20 (h)

Sustainable development: Harmony with Nature

Report of the Second Committee*

Rapporteur: Ms. Anneli **Lepp** (Estonia)

I. Introduction

1. The Second Committee held a substantive debate on agenda item 20 (see A/73/538, para. 2). Action on sub-item (h) was taken at the 23rd and 25th meetings, on 8 and 28 November 2018. An account of the Committee's consideration of the sub-item is contained in the relevant summary records.[1]

II. Consideration of draft resolutions A/C.2/73/L.39 and A/C.2/73/L.39/Rev.1 and amendments contained in document A/C.2/73/L.52

2. At the 23rd meeting, on 8 November, the representative of Egypt, on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of 77 and China, introduced a draft resolution entitled "Harmony with Nature" (A/C.2/73/L.39).

3. At its 25th meeting, on 28 November, the Committee had before it a revised draft resolution (A/C.2/73/L.39/Rev.1), submitted by the sponsors of draft resolution A/C.2/73/L.39.

4. At the same meeting, the representative of Austria, on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the European Union, made a statement and introduced proposed amendments to draft resolution A/C.2/73/L.39/Rev.1, as contained in document A/C.2/73/L.52.[2]

* The report of the Committee on this item is being issued in 12 parts, under the symbols A/73/538, A/73/538/Add.1, A/73/538/Add.2, A/73/538/Add.3, A/73/538/Add.4, A/73/538/Add.5, A/73/538/Add.6, A/73/538/Add.7, A/73/538/Add.8, A/73/538/Add.9, A/73/538/Add.10 and A/73/538/Add.11.

[1] A/C.2/73/SR.23 and A/C.2/73/SR.25.

[2] See A/C.2/73/SR.25.

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5. Also at the same meeting, the Committee was informed that the proposed amendments had no programme budget implications.

6. Also at its 25th meeting, the Committee rejected the proposed amendments contained in document A/C.2/73/L.52 by a recorded vote of 108 to 45, with 12 abstentions. The voting was as follows:

In favour:

Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

Against:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia.

Abstaining:

Iceland, Kiribati, Liechtenstein, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Switzerland, Turkey.

7. At the same meeting, before the vote, a statement in explanation of vote was made by the representative of Switzerland.

8. Also at the same meeting, after the vote, statements in explanation of vote were made by the representatives of Egypt (on behalf of the Group of 77 and China) and the United States of America.

9. Also at the 25th meeting, a statement was made after the vote by the representative of Austria, on behalf of the States members of the European Union.

10. At the same meeting, the Committee was informed that draft resolution A/C.2/73/L.39/Rev.1 had no programme budget implications.

11. Also at the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.2/73/L.39/Rev.1 (see para. 12).

III. Recommendation of the Second Committee

12. The Second Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

Harmony with Nature

The General Assembly,

Reaffirming the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, [1] Agenda 21, [2] the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, [3] the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development [4] and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg Plan of Implementation), [5]

Recalling the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 20 to 22 June 2012, entitled "The future we want", [6]

Reaffirming its resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015, entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", in which it adopted a comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centred set of universal and transformative Sustainable Development Goals and targets, its commitment to working tirelessly for the full implementation of the Agenda by 2030, its recognition that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, its commitment to achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions — economic, social and environmental — in a balanced and integrated manner, and to building upon the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals and seeking to address their unfinished business,

Reaffirming also its resolution 69/313 of 27 July 2015 on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, which is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, supports and complements it, helps to contextualize its means of implementation targets with concrete policies and actions, and reaffirms the strong political commitment to address the challenge of financing and creating an enabling environment at all levels for sustainable development in the spirit of global partnership and solidarity,

Recalling the 1982 World Charter for Nature, [7]

Noting the Peoples' World Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, hosted by the Plurinational State of Bolivia in Cochabamba from 20 to 22 April 2010, [8]

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[1] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3–14 June 1992*, vol. I, *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex I.

[2] Ibid., annex II.

[3] Resolution S-19/2, annex.

[4] *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August–4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

[5] Ibid., resolution 2, annex.

[6] Resolution 66/288, annex.

[7] Resolution 37/7, annex.

[8] See A/64/777, annexes I and II.

Reaffirming the New Urban Agenda, adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), held in Quito, Ecuador, from 17 to 20 October 2016,[9]

Recalling its resolutions 64/196 of 21 December 2009, 65/164 of 20 December 2010, 66/204 of 22 December 2011, 67/214 of 21 December 2012, 68/216 of 20 December 2013, 69/224 of 19 December 2014, 70/208 of 22 December 2015, 71/232 of 21 December 2016 and 72/223 of 20 December 2017 on Harmony with Nature and its resolution 63/278 of 22 April 2009, by which it designated 22 April as International Mother Earth Day,

Recalling the decision of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change at its eighteenth session [10] entitled "Agreed outcome pursuant to the Bali Action Plan", adopted in Doha on 8 December 2012, in which the Conference of the Parties, in section I, paragraph 2, among others, took into account the imperatives of equitable access to sustainable development,

Recalling also the interactive dialogue on living in harmony with nature held on the occasion of the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, held in Cancun, Mexico, from 4 to 17 December 2016,

Noting the first decade since the adoption of the Constitution of Ecuador in Montecristi in 2008, which was the first to have included the rights of nature at the constitutional level, as part of the broader effort to protect and respect nature,

Noting with appreciation the interactive dialogue on Harmony with Nature convened by the President of the General Assembly with the overall theme of Earth jurisprudence in the implementation of sustainable consumption and production patterns in harmony with nature, held on 23 April 2018, in commemoration of International Mother Earth Day and to inspire citizens and societies to reconsider how they interact with the natural world in order to implement the Sustainable Development Goals in harmony with nature, and noting that some countries recognize the rights of nature in the context of the promotion of sustainable development,

Recognizing that planet Earth and its ecosystems are our home and that "Mother Earth" is a common expression in a number of countries and regions, noting that some countries recognize the rights of nature in the context of the promotion of sustainable development, and expressing the conviction that, in order to achieve a just balance among the economic, social and environmental needs of present and future generations, it is necessary to promote harmony with nature,

Welcoming the Paris Agreement,[11] and encouraging all its parties to fully implement the Agreement, and parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change [12] that have not yet done so to deposit their instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession, where appropriate, as soon as possible,

Noting the importance of ensuring the integrity of all ecosystems, including oceans, and the protection of biodiversity, recognized by some cultures as Mother Earth, and noting also the importance for some of the concept of "climate justice", when taking action to address climate change,

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[9] Resolution 71/256, annex.

[10] FCCC/CP/2012/8/Add.1, decision 1/CP.18.

[11] Adopted under the UNFCCC in FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1, decision 1/CP.21.

[12] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1771, No. 30822.

Noting also that, in promoting a holistic approach to achieving sustainable development in harmony with nature, Earth system science plays a significant role,

Expressing concern about documented environmental degradation, potentially more frequent and intense natural disasters and the negative impact on nature resulting from human activity, and recognizing the need to strengthen scientific knowledge on the effects of human activities on the Earth systems, with the aim of promoting and ensuring an equitable, balanced and sustainable relationship with the Earth,

Recognizing that a number of countries consider Mother Earth the source of all life and nourishment and that these countries consider Mother Earth and humankind to be a living community of interrelated and interdependent beings,

Noting that in recent years there have been many initiatives on sustainable development governance, including policy documents on living well in harmony with nature,

Taking note of the conceptual framework of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services,[13]

Noting the adoption and the opening for signature, at United Nations Headquarters, of the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean, known as the Escazú Agreement, the first binding agreement of its kind, and encouraging its early entry into force as a contribution to sustainable development,

Recognizing that gross domestic product was not designed as an indicator for measuring environmental degradation resulting from human activity, nor is it an indicator of development, and the need to overcome these limitations with regard to sustainable development and the work carried out in this regard,

Recognizing also the uneven availability of basic statistical data under the three dimensions of sustainable development and the need to improve their quality and quantity,

Reaffirming that fundamental changes in the way societies produce and consume are indispensable for achieving global sustainable development and that all countries should promote sustainable consumption and production patterns, with the developed countries taking the lead and with all countries benefiting from the process, taking into account the Rio principles,

Recognizing that sustainable production and consumption patterns can contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, including by fostering economic growth, alleviating poverty and creating full and productive employment and decent work for all, including for women and youth, while promoting local culture, protecting the environment, improving the quality of life and promoting rural development and better living conditions for rural populations,

Recognizing also that many ancient civilizations, indigenous peoples and indigenous cultures have a rich history of understanding the symbiotic connection between human beings and nature that fosters a mutually beneficial relationship,

Recognizing further that the traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous peoples and local communities can support social well-being and sustainable livelihoods and therefore contribute to global efforts and initiatives such as the Sustainable Development Goals,

[13] See IPBES/2/17.

Noting that some countries are discussing the possibility of considering a declaration on the protection of nature,

Noting also that, in some countries, both formal and informal educational activities on the rights of Nature or Mother Earth have arisen in the professional and public spheres in the context of the promotion of sustainable development, and encouraging a holistic approach of education and public awareness for sustainable development in its three dimensions,

Recognizing the work undertaken by civil society, academia, scientists, local communities and indigenous peoples with regard to signalling the precariousness of life on Earth, as well as their efforts, along with those of Governments and private sector organizations, to devise more sustainable models and methods for production and consumption,

Noting the work of the experts of the Harmony with Nature Knowledge Network, who have initiated important activities to support the United Nations with the goal of ensuring that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature, as set out in target 12.8 of the Sustainable Development Goals,

Considering that sustainable development is a holistic concept that requires the strengthening of interdisciplinary linkages in the different branches of knowledge,

Reiterating the pledge that no one will be left behind, reaffirming the recognition that the dignity of the human person is fundamental, and the wish to see the Goals and targets met for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society, and recommitting to endeavour to reach the furthest behind first,

Recommitting to ensuring that no country or person is left behind and to focusing our effort where the challenges are greatest, including by ensuring the inclusion and participation of those who are furthest behind,

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on Harmony with Nature;[14]

2. *Invites* Member States to consider existing studies and, as appropriate, the findings and recommendations of the reports of the Secretary-General on Harmony with Nature,[15] of the experts' summary report of the first virtual dialogue of the General Assembly on Harmony with Nature, addressing Earth jurisprudence,[16] and of the interactive dialogues of the Assembly on Harmony with Nature in the promotion of the balanced integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development through harmony with nature;

3. *Requests* the President of the General Assembly to convene, at the seventy-third session of the Assembly, an interactive dialogue, to be held at the plenary meetings to be convened during the commemoration of International Mother Earth Day on 22 April 2019, with the participation of Member States, United Nations organizations, independent experts and other relevant stakeholders, to discuss the contributions of harmony with nature in ensuring inclusive, equitable and quality education on taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts and to inspire citizens and societies to reconsider how they interact with the natural world in the context of sustainable development;

4. *Encourages* the experts of the Harmony with Nature Knowledge Network to carry out a study of local and national initiatives on the protection of Mother Earth,

[14] A/73/221.

[15] A/65/314, A/66/302, A/67/317, A/68/325, A/68/325/Corr.1, A/69/322, A/70/268 and A/72/175.

[16] See A/71/266.

as applicable, to be considered by the Secretary-General in his report on the implementation of the present resolution;

5. *Decides* to continue observing International Mother Earth Day annually on 22 April, requests the Secretary-General to provide continuing support, and encourages Member States to observe the International Day at the national level;

6. *Takes note with appreciation* of the agreement between the Government of the Plurinational State of Bolivia and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat,[17] invites Member States to contribute to the earmarked activities related to Harmony with Nature under the trust fund of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, aiming, inter alia, at the participation of independent experts in the interactive dialogues of the General Assembly on Harmony with Nature, and invites relevant stakeholders to contribute to the earmarked activities related to Harmony with Nature;

7. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to use the website on Harmony with Nature, managed by the Division for Sustainable Development Goals of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, to gather information and contributions on ideas and activities to promote a holistic approach to sustainable development in harmony with nature and to advance the integration of interdisciplinary scientific work, including success stories on the use of traditional knowledge and on existing national legislation;

8. *Calls for* holistic and integrated approaches to sustainable development, in its three dimensions, that will guide humanity to live in harmony with nature and lead to efforts to restore the health and integrity of the Earth's ecosystems;

9. *Invites* States, as appropriate:

(a) To further build up a knowledge network in order to advance a holistic conceptualization of sustainable development in its three dimensions to identify different economic approaches that reflect the drivers and values of living in harmony with nature, relying on current scientific information to achieve sustainable development, and to facilitate support for and recognition of the fundamental interconnections between humankind and nature;

(b) To promote harmony with the Earth, including as found in indigenous cultures, to learn from those cultures and to support and promote efforts being made from the national level down to the local community level to reflect the protection of nature;

10. *Recognizes* that protecting ecosystems and avoiding harmful practices against animals, plants, microorganisms and non-living environments contributes to the coexistence of humankind in harmony with nature, and invites the Secretary-General to address these issues in his report on the implementation of the present resolution;

11. *Encourages* all countries to develop and strengthen the quality and quantity of basic national statistical data on the three dimensions of sustainable development, and invites the international community and the pertinent bodies of the United Nations system to assist the efforts of developing countries by providing capacity-building and technical support;

12. *Recognizes* the need for broader measures of progress to complement gross domestic product in order to better inform policy decisions, and in this regard notes the ongoing work of the Statistical Commission on a work programme to develop

[17] Available from www.harmonywithnatureun.org/trustfund.html.

broader measures of progress and to conduct a technical review of existing efforts in this area;[18]

13. *Calls upon* the relevant organizations of the United Nations system, within their respective mandates and resources, to ensure that no one is left behind, and no country is left behind in the implementation of the present resolution;

14. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session a report on the implementation of the present resolution, and decides to include in the provisional agenda of its seventy-fourth session, under the item entitled "Sustainable development", the sub-item entitled "Harmony with Nature".

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[18] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2013, Supplement No. 4* (E/2013/24), chap. I, sect. C, decision 44/114.